

JUNE 17, 1982

Only 21 percent of the voters registered in Texas voted in the May primaries. I didn't bother to check the turnout for the June contest. So many of the nominees surrendered in May that by then the ballot was too short to attract much attention.

A hundred years ago when the Shortgrass Country was one district, the settlers rode down to San Antonio to vote and pay their taxes. Greybeards like my great grandpa apparently thought nothing of saddling up for a 200 mile ride to go to the polls and settle their score at the tax office.

Quite a change of fiber has taken place in our times when the failure of the car air conditioning system disrupts our whole life. Why, I won't haul a dry cow to market in Angelo without factory air to frost the floorboard. It's a good thing that Dodge City played out before I came along, or city kids would have to catch jackrabbits to taste their first bite of meat.

Out in California, I hear that prizes are being given to get folks to come back to the polling places again. I guess the reason bribery is being used is that every time one of those California hombres gets to brooding about Nixon or Warren or Brown, he wants to take a long walk on the beach instead of going to vote.

Guilt is a powerful limitation on man. I know once I slipped up and voted for a fellow that had to spend his term of office hiding in South America. It was 10 years before I could raise my right hand at a church meeting without weighing the difference between a bingo party and a church supper to the point of conflict.

But to be sort of sensible, we herders had better hope that city folks stop voting. If we were able to trim 19 percent off that May figure, and form a coalition with the farmers, we could run this state.

Up until now I've always secretly wanted to be president of the Republic of Mexico because of the way they treat their chief executives. But don't think for a Manhattan minute that I'd turn down a chance to be Governor of Texas with a guaranteed cabinet of my neighbors backed by a chamber filled with cowboys.

Once we'd won, it wouldn't be hard to stay in power. All you need to do to accomplish that is to change from secret ballots to secret elections. For example, after the cattlemen's general session in Fort Worth, we'd adjourn downstairs and hold the governor's race. Say, a week later, the sheep and goat herders were meeting in Del Rio. At lunch time, we'd select the Railroad Commissioners and the Supreme Court. In case the farmers became jealous, we'd just put 50 of their boys in the legislature and top it off with a big party to celebrate their victory.

It'd be a great state government. Whenever our compadres were down at the capital on business we'd have limousine service, and I'd personally see that everybody had a swell place to stay and all the football tickets they needed. We'd be careful how we used our power; every summer we'd give a big beach party at Corpus or Galveston for the city folks.

The 21 percent turnout sure didn't elect many country boys. In November I'm going to checkboard my vote to avoid detection. Think over my plan. It may be our chance to make it big in politics.